

Message Text

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ACTION AF-07

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EB-04 COME-00 AID-05 IGA-01 DOTE-00 L-01

CIAE-00 INR-05 NSAE-00 RSC-01 SIL-01 LAB-01 STR-01

SP-02 /030 W

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R 061422Z NOV 74

FM AMEMBASSY LAGOS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6716

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EWWT, NI

SUBJ: LAGOS PORT CONGESTION: STATUS REPORT

REFS: LAGOS 9862 AND PREVIOUS

1. HEAVY PORT CONGESTION LAGOS/APAPA CONTINUES. AS OF NOVEMBER 4, DELAY TIMES FOR INCOMING SHIPS AS FOLLOWS: (A) APAPA IMPORT (SHIPS CARRYING GOODS FOR OFFLOADING AT APAPA): 25-27 DAYS; (B) APAPA EXPORT (SHIPS PICKING UP GOODS FOR EXPORT FROM APAPA): 4-5 DAYS; (C) LIGHTER BUOYS (SHIPS CARRY LIGHT CARGO FOR OFFLOAD BY LIGHTER): 10 DAYS; (D) CUSTOMS QUAY (SHIPS OFFLOADING CARGO AT ONE OF 3 BERTHS ON LAGOS SIDE OF PORT): 14-15 DAYS.

2. MOST SHIPPING CONFERENCES SERVING LAGOS HAVE BY NOW EITHER APPLIED PORT DETENTION SURCHARGE OR GIVEN NOTICE OF INTENT TO DO SO, WITH LEVIES IN 25-30 PERCENT RANGE. CONTINENTAL WEST AFRICAN CONFERENCE (COWAC), ONE OF THE MAJOR ONES, HAS GIVEN NOTICE OF 30 PERCENT SURCHARGE TO GO INTO EFFECT NOVEMBER 15. EVEN UK-WEST AFRICA CONFERENCE (UKWAL), WITH ITS BIAS AGAINST SURCHARGE (REFTEL) HAS GIVEN VERBAL NOTICE OF INTENT TO APPLY SURCHARGE IF PRESENT CONGESTION CONTINUES MUCH LONGER.

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SCUTTLEBUTT IS THAT AMERICA WEST AFRICA CONFERENCE (AWAFC)

HAS ALREADY APPLIED SURCHARGE OF 20 PERCENT AND WILL BE GOING TO 30 PERCENT ON NOVEMBER 24. HOWEVER LOCAL AWAFB SHIPPING REPS NOT ALWAYS KEPT FULLY INFORMED OF CONFERENCE PLANS, SO IT WOULD BE HELPFUL IF DEPARTMENT COULD KEEP US UP TO DATE ON KEY DECISIONS.

3. SENTIMENT IN THE TRADE HERE NOW TENDS INCREASINGLY TOWARDS VIEW THAT RECURRING PERIODS OF HEAVY PORT CONGESTION WILL BE FEATURE OF LIFE IN LAGOS UNTIL SUCH TIME AS MAJOR EXPANSION PROJECT - E.G., REOPENING OF SUPPLEMENTARY PORT AT NEARBY BADAGRY - IS UNDERTAKEN. THIS GENERALLY CONCEDED TO BE SOME YEARS OFF. RECENT DIFFICULTIES - HEAVY RAINS, PORT LABOR PROBLEMS, QUOTE BUNCHING UNQUOTE, EASING OF IMPORT BARRIERS, SHORTAGES OF PORT FACILITIES, ETC. - HAVE BEEN AGGRAVATING FACTORS LEADING TO PRESENT CRISIS. FUNDAMENTAL PROBLEM, HOWEVER, IS FACT THAT PRESENT TRANSPORT FACILITIES (INCLUDING ROAD AND RAIL AS WELL AS PORT FACILITIES) ARE NOT EQUAL TO NEEDS OF NIGERIA'S RAPIDLY EXPANDING ECONOMY. THUS IT SEEMS INEVITABLE THAT CURRENT CRISIS, AFTER IT SUBSIDES, WILL BE FOLLOWED BY OTHERS OF EQUAL OR GREATER SEVERITY FOR SEVERAL YEARS TO COME.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PORT CONGESTION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 06 NOV 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: smithrj
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974LAGOS10259
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D740319-1104
From: LAGOS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19741167/aaaacesf.tel
Line Count: 83
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION AF
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: LAGOS 9862 AND PREVIOUS
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: smithrj
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 03 SEP 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <03 SEP 2002 by WorrelSW>; APPROVED <11 MAR 2003 by smithrj>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: LAGOS PORT CONGESTION: STATUS REPORT
TAGS: EWWT, NI
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005